



*Ex Libris*

C. K. OGDEN



THE LIBRARY  
OF  
THE UNIVERSITY  
OF CALIFORNIA  
LOS ANGELES

10/16  
I. D. & M<sup>rs</sup> Wheeler  
with John Solsten's  
kind regards.

Sep. 1922

---



# BROKEN SHADE

POEMS

BY

JOHN HELSTON

LONDON

CHAPMAN & HALL, LTD.

1922

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY PURNELL AND SONS  
FAULTON, SOMERSET, ENGLAND

PR  
6015  
H369b

To  
**MAURICE REED,**  
*dead in the war,*  
*this book is inscribed in remembrance*  
*by the Author*

1001244

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation



I have to thank the Editors of *The English Review*, *The Nation*, and *Justice* for permission to reprint certain poems in this volume.



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
ÆGEAN . . . . .	9
THE MAMMON . . . . .	10
A UNITY . . . . .	11
TIME—AT THE BIRTH OF MAN . . . . .	12
PAGAN . . . . .	13
TROTH-PLIGHT . . . . .	14
A BRIDAL SONG . . . . .	15
ALIENS . . . . .	16
STARRYHURST . . . . .	17
WRAYTON THORN . . . . .	18
IN SOLWAY-SIDE . . . . .	19
CUCKOO SONG . . . . .	20
WHITE OR GOLD ? . . . . .	21
THE WOODWAY . . . . .	22
NIGHT-THROES . . . . .	23
AN EXILE . . . . .	24
SUBCONSCIOUS . . . . .	25
A RETROSPECT . . . . .	26
THE SEEKERS . . . . .	27
STORM . . . . .	32
SENTINELS . . . . .	33
CROGLIN WATER . . . . .	34
PAN MET WITH . . . . .	35
IN MARSHALLS LONNING . . . . .	36
THE HEALERS . . . . .	37
A CHURCHYARD . . . . .	38
NIGHT SHIFT . . . . .	39
THE DOWNS BEYOND . . . . .	40
MIRAGE ? . . . . .	41
THE WHITE POPLARS . . . . .	44
" LONG DOG " WILL . . . . .	45
JAAHN . . . . .	46
PAST HORIZONS . . . . .	47
A CASH TRADE CALVARY . . . . .	48
THE STRANGE WOMAN . . . . .	50
THE OLD MOTHER . . . . .	51

# CONTENTS—*Continued*

FERLIE HAUGHS	.	.	.	.	.	52
THE GOLD CUP	.	.	.	.	.	53
PRIZE-GIVINGS	.	.	.	.	.	57
AUTUMNAL	.	.	.	.	.	58
A HIDDEN GARDEN	.	.	.	.	.	59
SEPTEMBER AT HIGH HEAD CASTLE	.	.	.	.	.	60
ACROSS THE PLOUGH	.	.	.	.	.	61
IN CAMP	.	.	.	.	.	62
THE WET CANTEEN	.	.	.	.	.	63
A GUNNER	.	.	.	.	.	64
"TRENCH-LOOK"	.	.	.	.	.	65
A SENTRY	.	.	.	.	.	66
THE HONEST ARTIST	.	.	.	.	.	67
BINSEY HEAD	.	.	.	.	.	68

## ÆGEAN

I dreamed of the great dawns that woke  
The marble from the mine  
Into the white Greek women  
Of groves—among the pine  
And ilex dark, the sea-fogs cloak,  
That drip Ægean brine.

The sea mist and the sunlight stood  
Together on the sea  
Where phantom yet the argosies  
At long lost anchors be . . . .  
Now sun and silence haunt my blood  
From behind Thessaly.

## THE MAMMON

**I** saw, where woodland trees and skies were dark  
In green and blue—as when July is here,  
And time to dream of naiads lying stark  
With drowsy limbs and reed-pipes fluting near  
With music of the noon-tide of the year—  
In brimming shade a god of alien stone  
The deep heart of the thickets beat upon.

Even so I saw him in the clutch of shade  
While one still ray of sunlight searched his hand.  
I know not from what city he had strayed . . .  
May all his like be missing from the land.

## A UNITY

I, who have heard Orion splash on the midnight hills,—  
Who have been at veiled births of beauty by stark  
    moonlight,—  
Who have watched how the heart of eve grows quiet  
    on misty fells,—  
How loudly there comes from far a whiteness about  
    the plover,  
Trailing on slow strange wings her cry on the day and  
    night,—  
How darkly the pale air shrieks round the swoop of  
    the dark windhover,—  
I have known that colour and sound as a wave unite,  
Far in the ends of sense, where the spirit wells.

## TIME—AT THE BIRTH OF MAN

**H**ERE in the shadow of my labour stands  
The memory of things I wrought—  
The forms uncouth that peopled early lands :  
The jungles in the shadow of my thought  
Still move : and still with flanks asteam,  
With limbs asprawl and dull of mind,  
The brutes that made morasses quake and teem  
Come forth once more and voice an ancient world ;  
Where fiery mists and all their vanished kind  
Of glowing damps about the forest curled,  
And night herself was lit with ghosts of change,  
And from those still peaks yonder there were hurled  
The red-hot bowels of the mountain range.

So for the past ! Such memories waken near,  
Beside these mountains in a shaken gloom  
Of thunder, while the leagues of forest loom  
Far out beneath the lightning . . . Near or here,  
I know not if new change be in the dusk  
Of this grim day ; but ere the wind fell dead  
Upon that marsh, I saw a lifted tusk  
Gleam, and a mammoth trumpeting with fear—  
With fear or rage—who, from the forest boughs,  
Screamed through the swamp at foes the dark air, nigh  
That reeking pool, held for him . . . What could  
rouse

Him so ?—the place was empty as the sky  
Is now of wings . . . And then he wheeled and fled  
Back to his lair a mile beyond the marge  
Of those gloomed trees : I heard his flying fade  
In the dense wood—in footprints of his charge  
The water sucking at the air, *afraid !*



## PAGAN

**A** brightness stirs by the water's edge,  
As beautiful as the feet of Spring  
By the willowed pool with its banks of ling  
When west winds rule at its whispering.

A darkness whirrs from a cove of sedge.

Ere one can cry, "What means the thing?"  
A crow and a sea-gull strive in flight  
As they wheel together to left and right. . . .

But if your soul, from dark or shine,  
Turn but to grey,  
A ghost that's in your spine  
Shall take away  
Your sins and Springs,—  
Ay, cut your wings  
For good and evil in that day.

## TROTH-PLIGHT

**T**HE birds last night in the darkness flying  
Across the fern and crying, crying  
*Teu whit ! teu whoo ! teu whit ! teu whoo !*  
—The noisy owls as little knew  
Or cared what we went there to do  
As the quiet winds about us sighing.

And now the day is here ; and none  
Is like to see us save the sun.  
Come on, my love, the hills are clear.  
My lovely one, my bonny dear !  
If but the troth we kept hold true,—  
Ay, when last night's great stars are blown  
In dust before the lords of breath  
On their last gust and dying groan  
That herald universal death,  
We still may hear, as did those two,  
*Teu whit ! teu whoo ! teu whit ! teu whoo !*

I'll love when last night's stars are dead,  
And all that beauty overhead  
Is out of mind, is out of sight,—  
When yonder sun no more shall tan  
The face of any girl or man,  
Or set great nature's bonds alight . . . .  
Who knows ? the troth we kept last night  
May yet outlive each witness bright—  
Old Sirius—Aldebaran !

## A BRIDAL SONG

**M**Y company is of the stars,  
The darkness and the dew :  
Upon the hills and chines and scars  
To-night the moon is new—  
As in the years gone by, when I walked here with you.

The tide, its trouble and desire,  
Is even as we heard  
That night upon the cliffs expire :  
To-night the wind has stirred  
The dingle as when we listened there without a word.

Below the press of night, below  
The sound of tide or tree,  
Our sundered natures strive to go  
Together secretly—  
Here to beget a ghostly child of memory.

## ALIENS

**W**HEN midsummer had spoken you  
In whispers, of her power ;  
And one high cloud of thunder, through  
The voices of a shower,—

I watched you tread the still wood's grass,  
Smiling as in a sleep  
Where hueless dreams arise and pass  
To rainbows at a leap.

“ Seek in dreams ;” said I, aloud,  
“ Some women would have sought to find  
The fire sprung out of yonder cloud  
Gathered up in my heart and mind.”

## STARRYHURST

**W**HEN we hear the pine wood tell  
Tales of heaven and of hell  
Over lovers that are gone  
Beyond the moonlight and the moon,  
Our two hearts recite their beat  
Like a song with fate in it  
That men have heard come from a wood  
In some haunted neighbourhood.

And the pale owl gliding by  
The starry heights up in the sky  
Fans their silence with his wing :  
We have heard their silence sing  
How the meteor flames expire,  
Burst their flying hearts of fire—  
As things long pent that find them free  
On heaven's blue hill of ecstasy.

## WRAYTON THORN

THERE is a gate—the gate is white.  
I'd find it—darker than to-night . . . .

My mother cried upon me : “ *Shame !  
There's him would give you a honest name,  
You'd scorn for him as will deceive !* ”

I said, I'd see the heavens heave  
Their stars all over Smithy's plot  
'Fore I'd leave go the love I got  
Through kissing-back in Wrayton Thorn.

“ *You'll rue the day as you were born !* ”

But crying “ My dear ! ” just like a man,  
Thorn ran to meet me ; and I ran  
To see God walking in the trees  
And my man there upon his knees  
And lifting up his burning eyes . . . .

Then God went back into the skies.  
I heard the heavens close at ten  
By Wrayton clock across the fen.

## IN SOLWAY-SIDE

I'M awaey to my ain lad luver—  
Back yon i' th' moss behind,  
Where th' peat is crossed  
By th' last curlew's call an' th' breath o' stars,  
An' a passion is cum upon it fra' Solway scars  
As th' tide runs whisperin' over till sounds is lost,  
An' night like a dreamfu' woman her breast unbars.

## CUCKOO SONG

**B**EFORE me through an April rain  
A hillside echo goes—  
Is caught in a net  
Of young leaves wet,  
And now is off again . . . . .  
I would these days were those  
When I for love was out  
In greenwoods with my man,  
And yonder bird  
Were him we heard—  
Shout ! cloudy cuckoo, shout !  
You wily African.



## WHITE OR GOLD ?

THE time was when in towns  
    Laburnums carry  
        A golden fleece.

We went by woodways towards the down  
    Love-laden, very,—  
        Anxious for ease.

A broad robinia tree .  
    Its blossom snows  
        On the path in June—  
A hidden path where I and he  
    Through a leafy close  
        Hid from the noon.

Of petals white or gold,  
    Which would you choose  
        (White in your path) ?  
Which—if one cloud of thunder rolled,  
    Then silence, the blue's  
        Heat without wrath ?

## THE WOODWAY

### SONG

**T**HERE'S a woodway said to be  
Where a rainbow tints a tree  
And a bird sings suddenly  
In a land behind a hill.

There at noon-day falls a gleam  
Through the shadows on a stream  
When the Pan god pipes adream  
With the breath of summer fill.

There a woodman strange and wild,  
By Orion star-beguiled  
In a valley as a child,  
Watches in that valley still.

*Andante*



*rall. e dim.*

## NIGHT-THROES

**I**N peaceful oceans of the dew  
The island juniper  
Stand up and watch the night renew  
Her starry hemisphere.

*" I'm in the berried bush, my love,  
Where night is on the down.  
I would the dews might rise above  
My heart—and passion drown ! "*

She heard the night wind leave the hill  
A long dark league away.  
A withered fen became her will,  
Her womb a pit of clay.

## AN EXILE

**A**LL night the bentgrass and the weeds  
Move secretly in undertones.  
A falling water tells of loss  
In darkness on the stones.  
And like a phantom of old deeds,  
There is a ghost upon the moss.

I seek the rowans' wintry shade :  
The fell-side branches from the sky  
Are not more distant than my arms  
From her for whom they die.  
And withered as the weed and blade  
A long dead starlight sets and swarms.

## SUBCONSCIOUS

A windy shadow on the down,  
The beech wood is for her a tomb ;  
Nor shall our sin be ever known—  
My likeness fades from out her womb  
Beneath the soil and the beech leaves brown . . . .

“Awake, my husband ! Awake, beloved !  
All night I have listened while you slept  
Amid wild trees, for years, that moved  
And mocked you when their leaves were stripped !”

“I ? No ! My God ! For I have lain  
All night with secrets in my brain  
The fiend himself for fear had kept !”

## A RETROSPECT

**F**AR twilights, where as soft as rain  
The aspens whisper and are still,  
I would I trod your dusks again  
And solitary as the hill.

But now a City shares my life  
With some sleuth lust naught can appease,  
And I have taken a whore to wife,  
And no lee light comes o'er the trees.

## THE SEEKERS

### (i)

THEY came to that land from the north,  
By the old road now thronged with grass  
And hawk'sbit flowers like graven brass  
And knapweeds dark that love wild earth . . . .

Where the old road fades out in ling,  
In purple heath, in gorse of gold,  
Where whinchats talk and kestrels wing  
Even now as ere the way grew old,  
And where all else that might be told  
Is lost beneath the wilding stealth  
Of gorse and grass and ling and years  
And all that gives wild hills their wealth  
Of secrets for the winds' wild ears,  
—Though for no man's those secrets are—  
There stand. And through the darkest day,  
Southwards that water far away  
Gleams ; and its gleam is wild as far . . . . .

*They knew their quest was strange as that strange dew  
Before the starless night came on ;  
And the dim water's gleam was old, they knew.  
In the morning they slept strangely in the sun.*

### (ii)

They came to that land from the south . . . .  
Miles deep, a woodland, oak and ash,—  
Where thewed like time or lithe as youth

Stray beeches tower and take the lash  
Of storms upon them, laughing high  
Through wilder laughters from the sky,  
Or wooers of the lightning flash,  
Stiffen, and shriek of death, and die,—  
Miles deep, a woodland haunts the ways.  
Men lost there sicken, rumour says.

The undergrowths are strangely dark ;  
Strange scents and sounds are in the earth ;  
There midnight hears the dog-fox bark,  
The vixen scream, and that eerie birth—  
Night-pregnant cries come forth for death  
While cries as wild come hot for love :  
The hazels whisper 'neath their breath,  
The brambles and the brackens move.

And northward of those woods, the mere  
Lies with its waters hid. A rise  
Of ground begins at the woods there.  
The golden broom-flowers fill one's eyes  
In June on all that rising ground.  
Slow streams there are, without a sound  
Spread secretly through grass and rush  
In that long, marshy, golden hill,  
Past myrtles wild—the sweet-gale bush,  
Past roots that keep the water still  
In pools whose mirrored heavens hold  
The starry Spring's marsh marigold . . . . .

*They heard all night the stealth of woodland things  
Hunting. They saw, when day was near,  
Long slopes in flower and the grass lit with springs.  
They said : " This day we look to find the mere."*



They came to that land from the east . . . .  
 A cleft there is high in the hill  
 That crouches there like some great beast  
 Above a hollow place grown still  
 For its vast presence. And the cleft  
 Is scented over from height to height  
 With thyme that breathes the sun, the dew—  
 The downland scent of day-and-night.  
 Though nought save memory is left  
 Of light or dark 'mid chalk and yew  
 And the great slopes so still by day,  
 Dreaming, wind-lulled, where gods renew  
 Their freshness, slopes that steal away  
 By night beneath the stars and cloud  
 To some far tryst of their giant kind—  
 The downland scent returns, remains,  
 Whilst hills look out upon the plains,  
 When memory's voice fades in its shroud,  
 When even memory goes blind.

Look westward from that down—the last  
 Of all its chalky range—below,  
 There lie some miles of sand, a waste  
 Where many pines and birches grow.  
 And wide the fern is rippled there  
 When summer wind goes through the trees ;  
 Deep in those brackens to their knees  
 Stand rocky shapes like men who bear  
 An ancient burden from the seas,  
 While clouds above their voiceless waves  
 Sweep and the sunlight leaves the sand  
 Which gleams about that hollow land,—  
 Ay, shadow there like a sea behaves.

And there the day's end, like a sign  
Of stealth to tides whose wave it fills,  
Ebbs westward through the birch and pine—  
Robbed of their shadows by the hills  
That haunt the sunset's border line.  
Sometimes, 'twixt sundown and the dark,  
A mist floats up from off the mere ;  
And from its silence dusk distils  
A spirit of hidden waters there,  
Far off, vague, beautiful, and stark . . . .

*They lay like shadows all a summer's day  
'Neath a lone yew tree on the down.  
The lands below them rose and fell away  
Like dreams in sleep or faces when they drown.*

(iv)

They came to that land from the west . . . .  
The hills are rough ; the woods are high—  
And one of firs is on the crest,  
Wherein, 'tis said, that dead men lie.  
And some have heard their battle cry,  
And some have found a broken spear  
Whose head was green as mosses are,  
A skull, and weariness and fear,  
In that place of forgotten war ;  
Where, hearkening the fir-wood's sigh,  
Are caves and mounds and trees decayed  
Where they have fallen in a gloom  
Whose shadows make the mind afraid  
At midday—having within their womb  
The endless and the unallayed.

From those dark hills the mere receives  
The last rays of the setting sun  
Across a mile of aspen leaves  
That whisper all their days, till one  
Of autumn breath comes there and lays  
Their voice to rest where they are sown  
In dim fen waters and winding ways  
Where the shrill-mourning reeds intone  
Long requiems. . . . A house of stone  
Stands in the aspen tract alone.  
Its mill-wheel rots : its roof is riven :  
Rank weeds look through its broken panes :  
To bats and owls the place is given.  
A hundred years the storms and rains  
Have searched there, and the suns and frosts  
In silence. For its title deeds,  
No man disturbs among the weeds  
The squatting toad, the rusty chains,—  
None the grey poplars' talk with ghosts . . . .

*They saw the ruin aspen-veiled ; passed by.  
Said one : " Of old, we knew that place.  
A mere lies close, where the wild herons fly  
And no man twice peers in to see his face."*

## STORM

**T**HE fell-water comes with a cry.  
Skiddaw's ghostly bulk is loud—  
Streaming, shaken in a cloud,  
His shoulders bear the thunder-sky.  
And underneath his starless height  
A stricken pine-tree shrieks and falls . . . .  
Faces—faces hurrying, white,  
Come and go where the water calls  
To feats of elemental night  
Along Blencathra's mountain walls.

O crying water men may hark !  
The madness of the storm is known ;  
The lightning to the world is stark.  
But on my heart there is fallen a stone  
Out of the heavens in the dark.

## SENTINELS

**G**REY the day above Birdoswald ;  
The wind comes to the Wall  
As from northward moors in motion—  
Heather seething in the fall.

Where the Roman's spear was grounded,  
No more the sentry stands,  
Midway 'twixt his strong "mile castles,"  
Time upon his hands.

Midway 'twixt the strong "mile castles,"  
In the still fosse I lie,  
With a thistle's spear above me  
Pointing at the sky.

## CROGLIN WATER

CROGLIN Water, O wild Croglin Water !—  
Bonny from the peat and brown  
As the light on the basking otter  
In warm brackens lower down.

Like your linns that shout and blend their voices  
On the rock they carve and spray,  
Steals an echo heavy with all time's noises  
Through the gorge of life away.

And beyond the gorge, the wider river  
Shouts an answer and then is still . . . . .  
Praising the gift—that men may praise the giver—  
O Croglin Water through the hill ?

For I know no answer, though the torrent  
Of my living leaps and swells . . . . .  
But there rise in quiet places of its current  
Bubbles like an otter's bells.

## PAN MET WITH

**T**HE clouds hold their high mysteries  
To-day on every hill.  
By Wetheral the windy trees  
Hide flutes of shade  
Where noon has played  
All its dense notes at will.

Where Eden river's gorges wind  
The water hymns a god.  
And there 'mid strange ways of the mind  
The goat-foot falls,  
The blown pipe calls,  
Through listening underwood.

## IN MARSHALLS LONNING

**A**T evening when the dusks begin  
To bring forth stars and use the trees  
With twilight stealth and, close to men,  
On earth beget the mysteries,

The beetle in the lonning tells  
To me how a Pictish arrow drones,—  
The owlet cries across the fells  
How Roman soldiers hide their bones.



## THE HEALERS

**B**Y down and weald, by weald and down,  
That saw the British tiger pass  
And the last mammoth's dying swoon  
Spread stillness through the shaken grass,  
Dwells beauty which outlives them  
By some sweet power of days  
Those lands breathe while it gives them  
Sunrise, and evening rays,  
And nights of calm, and noon that plays  
Like fountained fire  
In its desire  
On heaths and on their ancient ways  
Like fountained fire,—  
By weald and down, by down and weald,  
I have heard men cry their souls were healed.

## A CHURCHYARD

QUAINT pictures of the sun in power  
And insurrections of the stone  
The lichens dwelling on the tower  
Have wrought for thrice a hundred years,  
Where silently a sign appears—  
A creeping shadow of the hour,  
Appears, and then is gone . . . .

Quietly as from the dial up yon  
The clouds depose time's darkened ray,  
Pale folk come in a cloud of thought—  
The folk for whom time's ways are nought,  
And with great eyes that answer none,  
Pass me, and steal away.

## NIGHT SHIFT

**T**HE oast cowl cools its steadfast ear  
Among the stars . . . The fern owl spins  
His one note among the whins  
And the moth-wings flying near . . . . .

The dark cone stands there, breathing high . . . . .  
O'er the hopfield's shadowy rows  
Into the west Orion goes . . . . .  
Farmer has his hops to dry.

### THE DOWNS BEYOND

**S**EE now, the voiceless moon,  
With yet enough of breath to fill  
Man's heart as with a boon  
Of valleyed peace and hill,—

It rises ; and the quiet yews  
Breathe softly as the great rays pass  
Across the downs' peace of the dews  
That shows for miles upon the grass.

## MIRAGE ?

THE year has burnt the hillsides brown.  
The hot air goes beneath the trees  
And takes the life of flowers  
And drinks the wild-brooks to their lees  
That once were bright beneath the down.

A borstall climbs upon the chalk  
To livid east and livid west :  
Even ere his midday hours  
The sun the whole sky has oppressed  
For all that lie on earth or walk.

An elm shrieks out and throws a limb  
On fly-stung cattle mute below.  
And now an iron bell  
Clangs from the hillside . . . Two men throw  
Earth from their spades . . . I hearkened him

Who left off first to drink. "*Ay, haard  
She wur, I hev heerd say, as this.*"  
(He struck the flints, to tell  
How hard she was) "*Ther's none to miss  
This un what's gaan to meet th' Laard !*"

"*Er's done wi'out us foak that long—  
Paarson, ee says, twur noaat but pride,  
Since 'er man left 'er lone.*"  
A furlong up the harsh hillside,  
I knew the grave-man's talk was wrong.

A man lay in the juniper.  
His eyes were not as man's may be.  
A darkness in its bone  
His face had while it sullenly  
Watched where it saw them bury her.

Some bugloss banners, faint with heat,  
Some yellow bedstraws, bleached and dry,  
Were 'twixt us as I passed—  
Going up toward that livid sky  
That seemed as leaden as my feet.

A gap between tall dogwoods twain  
Showed me the thing . . . . the borstall hedge  
Went on with me . . . . at last  
I dropped upon a barrow's ridge . . . .  
When those loud heart-beats left my brain,

I knew what he, alive below,  
Had done to her none came to weep,  
For whom was such desire  
As shut the sun out from her sleep :  
I know not how I came to know.

But I crept to the edge to stare  
Down the burnt grass where that still bush  
Swam in the foothills' fire.  
I could have cried to God, to crush  
The hill, because the man was there.

I could not see him, yet could see  
None else—save her laid underground.  
My brain a burning wire  
Touched, and I heard her silence sound  
The long years of his cruelty.

" *Paarson, ee says, twur noaat but pride !* "

I have seen things that hide their hurt,

Seen those that fear the dark :

And she on whom they flung the dirt

Had strength to bury love that died.

But that foul thing that lit love's tomb

With yonder eyes, it haunted her

Even when she heard the lark . . . .

Down there among the juniper,

Maybe the man had guessed his doom—

I saw the hot air, like a glass,

Reflect some hidden frenzy there.

And when I went to mark

The place—'twas though as in a lair

Some beast had beaten down the grass.

## THE WHITE POPLARS

**S**WIFT beauty climbs the engine steam, and shows  
Haunts of hushed nightingales to flying sound  
And the incurious light upon the train,  
And then as swiftly goes ;  
And darkness throbs upon the shaken ground ;  
The leaves with whispers settle to repose ;  
And the clear singing comes to life again . . . .

But on the midnight lingering still  
The lifted leaves' last gestures pale divide  
The darkness from the echoes on the hill,  
And woo a man with their ghostly will  
From the dark banks of suicide.



“ LONG DOG ” WILL

**S**LICK-EYED William ! “ Long dog ” Will !  
A gate of stars has the gap in the hedge  
On Martyr’s High—the shadowy hill  
That knows the night from edge to edge  
And whispers now, and now is still.

You and your mate you taught to turn  
In her own shadow’s length almost  
When the moon was high above the fern,  
And hide where scarce could hide a ghost—  
The two of you are gone, I learn ?

Yet, Will, I thought I saw her now,  
Full chase—her speed smoke through the stars  
That gate the hedge-gap on the brow . . . .  
And I remembered her brindle’s bars  
And colours like an autumn bough.

And I remembered her eyes of fire :  
Her brain looked through them like a fiend.  
I guess you found your heart’s desire  
That day you brought her home, just weaned.  
I met the two of you, down White Mire . . . .

None hurt her, times you were in gaol,  
Save where they hid you, she could not find.  
The Oaksteads farmer tells the tale :—  
He shot her in the dyke behind.  
But you were dead on Paschendaele.

## JAAHN

**J**AAHN runned an' leaped wi' joy, ee did !  
Ee wur a gammock one to leap  
An' beat 'em aall at games. Then bloody Ned—  
By Diial Post—grown jallus, devil's brat !  
Laid trap for en ! A-dreamed it in 'is sleep,  
Ee sayed . . . . That's how it comed to *that*.

Yaan gaarse ower yaander, whur my hand  
Do piint—a miile fraam Maartyr's heer—  
That's whur that Satan's sand-pit be, th' sand  
They lads 'd juump in aan thur springy vet.  
An' Ned, as couldn't come my Jaahn aneer  
At leaping—thur 'is trap ee set.

Ee marked my Jaahn's best leap : gurt stones  
Ee buried unner it by daark.  
Nex' tiime my dearie juumped, ee give two groans,  
That's aall, they sayed . . . . Th' daactor  
says, "'is spiine !'  
An' held my hand liike—when we'd stripped en  
staark . . . . .  
Jaahn's thurrtty—never's give a siign !

## PAST HORIZONS

**M**AARNIN' ! Yaan steeple ? Aye, he were built  
When I were buildin' along o' him  
My pride upon my first en, Jim.  
A gurt big chap, as growed an' growed ! . . . .

I watched en take th' Lunnon road  
By six, one maarnin' in '65,  
June twenty-faaur. That *were* a yeer—  
Th' best hay yeer, as I'm alive !

Me an' my mates gived en a cheer.  
On that ere spiire as piints to sky,  
I watched en pass. He shouts, " Good-bye,  
Faather ! " He stands an' shouts it up  
To me a-workin' nigh th' top,  
From him so clear-like down in road . . . . .

Aye, you can see th' road fraam here,  
On Maartyr's High . . . . So help me God !  
I watched my first en *dis-ser-peer*.

## A CASH TRADE CALVARY

GUS 'Ammond—'im that used ter buy  
For Robins, Gray, an' 'Obb, but 'ad  
Consumption, an' come down a bit  
In life—said 'ow th' food was bad,  
An' chucked up Sharp's becoz of it.  
Then Joe Meach came an' 'ad a try.  
An' what 'e stood from Fatty Sharp  
Would 'ave made a hangel bust 'is 'arp!

Oh—an' a 'ill called Martyr's 'Igh  
We'd go ter, early closin'! There  
'E'd take 'is 'at off to th' air.  
"Ah! Mister 'Ughes!" 'e'd say ter me,  
"Life's very different *here*," 'e'd say,  
"When I've my takin's wrong, or we  
"Are open late o' Saturday!"

\* \* \* \* \*  
\* \* \* \* \*

One Sunday, Joe, I 'ad 'is girl—  
Up past th' woods. It was that fun!  
I stuffed 'er mouth with clover flowers!  
An' for two mortal blinkin' hours  
We clean went mad there in th' sun!  
O' Monday, I stood in th' shop  
'Side Joe. She winked be'ind some bales  
While Joe was tryin' ter make 'is sales  
Come right. An', as per usual, Joe—  
Th' silly blighter—was all wrong,  
'Bout everythink an' me an' Flo!  
Then sudden-like I saw 'im stop.  
'E caught us lookin'—seemed ter know  
'E was no good at anythink.

I saw 'er try another wink—  
It was no good. Fair bloomin' cop !  
I felt a rotter after that !  
An' you'll berlieve me, but it seem  
As I'd a touch of 'eav'nly grace !  
For Jesus Christ without 'is 'at  
Come all at once into th' shop—  
An' there was Joe a-servin' 'im !  
Joe with a 'at with but a *brim*—  
An' stuck above 'is own red face !

## THE STRANGE WOMAN

THE women used to sharp their tongues and call  
their kids away

When her dark brows would lighten to watch them at  
their play.

And she would lift her eyes a little : her gleaming  
sinner's mouth

Would smile above the falling street towards woodlands  
to the south,

Where the oak stands o'er the hazel and the aspen  
screens are grey.

What has become of her, by now, who sinned there  
in the grass ?

For many men as lovers, they said her fancy was.

A great bold lass, a fine lass . . . The woodman  
has a tale :—

A woman with a face of fire who made the sunset pale  
And left the brakes to westward, three years come  
Michaelmas.

## THE OLD MOTHER

THE becks that never sleep  
They tell their measureless tale  
To the darkness among the rocks  
And the stars upon the fell,  
Where the heather hides the fox  
And a woman goes to weep.

In Flanders lies her son  
Who watched the elvers dim  
—It seems but yesteryear—  
Come up to play with him . . . .  
The fox has heed of her—  
The stars and water none.

## FERLIE HAUGHS

**T**HE old man sees them, hears their word,  
Who made the sunset and taught to swim  
The water-vole, and the grey-green bird  
To sing in the grey-green over him.  
Ay, yon, he sees more things than seem  
Upon the haughs, to the neighbour-folk ;  
Who fleer his lass, and his mind—for smoke,  
Saying : “ Her handfu’ o’ shame has blurred  
His brain . . . though his een were afterward  
Unco bright, gin ye looked in ’em ! ”



## THE GOLD CUP

THE grey road sweats from long black wounds below  
A crowd of flying wheels, that hiss and scream,  
Or with the voice of some wild equinox,  
Surge through the spells by which midsummer woods  
Enchance their silences for public ways  
As for life's hot high turnpike.

I have seen  
The solar worlds turn in the lathe of time,  
The great stars, that have gone behind the blue—  
Those bright and awful engines, in the dark  
Move round the mandrels of eternity ;  
Have felt their silence and their motions mine.  
These things have reached me so I deemed it God  
Was drawing at my fibres : and the touch  
Has made me holy with strange heat.

But here,  
Speed was a daemon, and of closer kin :  
His madness was one wrought for men that wive  
With flesh and blood,—who fill the earth with noise,  
And melt her veins to make steel chariots.  
Yet here with something more akin to joy  
Than to this lust for leaving trees behind,  
(Though beauty haunt their boughs, and in their leaves  
All day the grey wood-pigeon makes his song)  
The daemon urged me onward, westward, through  
The Bagshot sands—the bramble-odoured miles,  
With all their serried glooms of pine, wherein  
The death-wind of the burnished dragon-fly  
Cools its hot wings in shadow. And I saw  
In the June woodlands foxgloves watch the fern  
Rise and grow dark with summer on the trees,

And elders whiten in the copse, and white  
The high robins breathe their petals down—  
Strayed sheep pick from the grasses ; the purple spires,  
Whose chimes fall softly over Bracken Land  
As do their slender shadows.

And by me flashed

Women, for whom the looms of all a world  
Have woven to fix the rainbow and the skies  
And colours that are born at evening,  
At morning, or when noons about the earth  
Lie strange in labour, starkly and aswoon.  
I saw fat necks, and flowers, in backs of cars :  
Fair faces like fair pastures of the soul  
Where gentle thoughts grow that a spirit rears,  
I saw go by ; and the dark face of greed,  
Lit by its welcome for a day that has  
The gambler's flame at heart not twenty miles  
Away ; the drunkard's face, whose trembling fills  
The swollen and stained ensigns of debauch ;  
The glutton's, saying graces in the sun,  
While yet asleep 'mid its own fleshy pillows ;  
Faces of manhood suave and debonair.  
This route of things swam in the stream of Speed  
That filled the roads to flood : only the sun  
And the shadows, his allegiant retinue,  
In woods of soft-foot shade, it seemed, were slow . . .

And now the wheels were still, and put away.  
Now well-fed flesh—that tastes a strong delight  
In these high functions that keep life alive  
For men and women, and make swift the soul  
For its escape from dullness as the legs  
Of horses for yon green course 'twixt the rails—  
Propitiates the gambler's god ; or seeks

A Delphic voice among the newspapers',  
That shall so move the legs on some one steed,  
The soul that hearkens to the prophecy  
Shall leave all weariness behind . . . .

“ They’re running ! ”  
The cries leave off. With all its eyes, the crowd  
Watches the bay or chestnut, black or brown ;  
Bright silks of variant hue . . . . There in the sun,  
A slow lone swallow moves above the grass.  
And gallop, gallop, gallop, goes the field—  
Is gone again—now there along the pines . . . .

“ You’ve done the favourite ? ”

“ A certainty !  
Eh ? Well then, more or less ! One has to plunge  
In these days . . . . They’ve been out on strike  
for weeks.

One must make money somehow ! . . . . Mrs. A  
Will have two husbands after this week’s fun,  
If *this* gets beaten—or they wrong the dame.  
They say she’s gone the—”

“ Really ? ”

“ Damn it all,  
She’ll have to get it *somewhere* ! ”

“ Two, more or less—  
What ! ”

“ Look here, Bobby, stow your more or less !  
Be charitable, can’t you ! ”

“ Here they are !  
He's *there* with 'em ! ”

“ Thank God ! And going *well* !  
He's coming now ! Hooray ! The favourite's  
Won it—he's won it *now* ! . . . Good God ! he's  
beat !  
Damnation take the bloody brute ! I'm—”

Black,

For hosts of eyes, a painted number goes  
Into the frames' white glare—a gallows-thing  
For thousands, whom it mocks at, while they see  
A hangman at their hopes . . . .

And in the sun,  
A slow lone swallow moves above the grass.

## PRIZE-GIVINGS

FAR voices of the peep o' day  
Come like a throng ;  
The rustling poplars in the grey  
To stealthy choirs belong—  
Choirs that have heard  
The daybreak-bird  
Excels them with his song.

And whispering in all their leaves,  
They breathe afar—  
Competitors whom daybreak gives  
For prize the morning star ;  
Whose silver rings  
Each leaf that swings  
Where their tall shadows are.

The air on high is strange bestirred ;  
The song in heaven  
Falls through their leaves whose every word  
Has silver echoes even—  
An elfin crowd  
That breathes aloud  
While the chief prize is given.

## AUTUMNAL

**M**ISTFALL, damp leaves, and bracken still,  
No wind, a wan sky saddening to grey,  
And silence that inherits from the hill  
Things alien, everlasting, far away,—

All these encompass me. As in a throng  
Of rapt vague presence, I repeat alone  
The litanies of elementary song  
That rise from out my blood-beat's monotone.

## A HIDDEN GARDEN

A winding water, under hills that are  
Its age-long listeners, is in that land :  
Voiced with their echoing woods, they reach afar,  
Hill behind hill, soft-spoken as a band  
Of pilgrims at a shrine, the Pan pipe calls.  
Sometimes within the darks of their own leaves  
A whispering stealth they hide  
As though of fugitives :  
Thronging the underwoods and hour, noon-tide  
Comes through those hills, and then to silence falls.

A garden hidden there has made the sound,  
The silence, one with flower-bright slopes at noon  
That, as through magic rising from the ground,  
Watch by the water-levels. And a swoon—  
Such trance as sleeping shadows have—is thrown  
On that earth-haunted zone of coloured air.  
The sun lights dark yew trees  
As though a god hid there  
Was watching too, while spells worked, and release  
Waited on gods long sculptured in their stone.

And there man's spirit, from its shapen clay,  
Goes forth to seek its fashioners and find  
A radiant parentage the middle day  
Broods over with great eyes asleep and blind  
With watching at the noon-tide of desire.  
Desire fulfilled is there. And what fulfils  
That dream is even as the flowers  
For colour, and even as the hills  
For hearkening when stream-spoken, and as the  
hours  
For thronging time with crowded flight and fire.

## SEPTEMBER AT HIGH HEAD CASTLE

THE season to the forest ground  
Makes answer—echoes that renew  
The vanished ones of Inglewood ;  
They rise with all their leaves around  
And mighty yet in their foresthood—  
Great oaks and ash trees like desires  
For light and shade, or silent spires  
Of thought dim-breathing in the dew.

O spirit moving as a sea  
Below the moon's pale stress, and drawn  
Throughout life's endless deeps ! O tide  
Unseen and strong as gravity,—  
Unseen as powers the planets hide  
Deep in their hearts, that move the wheel  
Of all the worlds,—could man but feel,  
As earth, his year's fulfilment dawn !

The summer passes like a sign  
Betwixt an earth and a sky less known  
To man than to the forest fern,  
The beck's hushed voice, the ancient line  
Of that old wood whose branches turn  
The sun-stream over rigg and slack,  
The far twin fells of Saddleback  
Which top Blencathra's bulk of stone.



## ACROSS THE PLOUGH

**T**HROUGH each furrow the midnight hours  
Flow on 'neath the falling rays  
In a starlight of solemn powers  
Where only the gray owl answers such things as the  
poplar says.

But the falling of rays was caught  
By pale women as in a trance—  
The mothers whose fearful doubt  
Needs must follow the plough in France.

Through thorns of a hedgerow, that throng  
Up the hill in their glooms and tear  
Passing winds with as dark a song  
When Wild Hunts of winter are round,  
Came echoes of laughter—the sound  
Crept over my feet from the ground  
Like a snake from the hedge ; from the hedge—like  
ghost-hands into my hair.

## IN CAMP

I, and oaths, and my rough mates,  
We fill the tent with noise,  
A dozen of us, reprobates—  
With finer, strange alloys  
When the moon comes o'er the hill  
And looks on our mystery  
And the bugle bids us be  
Asleep or lying still.

Then as twelve spokes within a wheel  
We seem, with but one common goal . . . .  
The empty helmets seem to reel  
Round rifles hanging from the pole . . . .

On its back, upon the ground,  
Our wheel of life lies there . . . .  
The great wheel of the world goes round :  
Reveille climbs the morning air.

## THE WET CANTEEN

EYH ! where's " Jack Cade " the sergeant gone  
As came out of the Fusiliers ?

A sod if ever there was one ! . . . . .

Oh, he went west at Armenteurs . . . . .

I've kep' his book . . . he's tried to write,

See—7 pints absen 1st parade . . . . .

Gord bloody blimey, wot a sight ! . . . . .

Well, 'ere's good luck to Sergeant Cade.

## A GUNNER

**G**UNNER, why stand ye in the moon,  
While the evening hate goes by ?  
—me ! with umpteen shells an' one  
For doings in the sky !

And we all see the gunner clear  
In the world without an end,  
With a brush what he scrounged off a bombardier  
An' a tin o' Soldier's Friend.

“ TRENCH-LOOK ”

**T**HREE dead men they look at me  
From where they died in broken ground.  
One, the big man of the three,  
Still has eyes to stare and wound—  
Big enough for three.

Both the others by his side  
Sleep it seems because they died.  
But the man who sits and stares—  
All of sight the others had,  
Sometimes when the light is bad,  
Takes him unawares.

And that death should set men free,  
Comes as no surprise—  
Comes as no surprise *to me* ;  
Though the big man of the three  
Stares with all his eyes.

## A SENTRY

**T**WO hours to watch the waves' long front emerge  
Out of the darkness over the sea, and shine  
Wan as a phantom moon in dreams where a phantom  
surge  
Breaks and spreads seething towards one, line by line.  
Two hours to watch and to tramp the sand and to smell  
the brine.

With many deaths stored cunningly close in the  
magazine,  
Ready to leap, at a touch, for a mile or more—  
Watching awhile, at ease, how the bayonet keen  
Severs the spindrift blowing across the shore—  
Watching in starlight, cold as the steel to a world at war.

## THE HONEST ARTIST

SAID HE :

My friend, monopolise  
Me as you will—bind not my eyes,  
For fear lest they some naiad should surprise.

AND FOR HER ANSWER,

it came pat :  
Art drowns the kittens not the cat !  
Are your eyes open after that ?

## BINSEY HEAD

### A TRAGEDY

**S**EEN from the dales, but lonesome, still, and high,—  
On Binsey Head the winds with hue and cry  
Throng a road-end, a planting. Down the fell  
Beyond the firs, are two camp-circles old—  
Hoarse with long bents, at times of windy cold,  
Hoarse as from some rough tale they strive to tell.

The north looks on to them, and with a shout  
Sometimes—when day breaks or when day goes out  
Wildly on those dim mounds of windy grass.  
Sometimes shrill voices come, the dales-folk say,  
To keen above the place : and he is fey  
Who meets them in the planting, when they pass.

Yet in the fosse dikes, where the heart's-ease shows  
Its faint shy eyes and beauty, quiet goes—  
Blows, as it were, for evermore. And men,  
Who face the north across the fells, may creep  
Warm 'twixt the ramparts as the mountain sheep—  
Such changes of the air are wrought therein.

But he who lies there when the north is loud,  
And after, mounts the ridges, he is bowed  
Before a summons sharp as pain, that calls  
Cold to his heart, and to his breathing, cold :  
A young man's blood there in an hour grows old—  
So swift the spells at work above the walls.

\* \* \* \* \*



Jim Andrews' lass lived out Seaturrock way,  
On Thunder—fells south-eastward ; where the play  
Of sunlight on Tarn Levin fills the slack\*  
With fire, and heather purples it, and sound  
Comes through a rake† and mutters round and round  
The whinstone—from the winds on Shadowback.

Men stared at her as though she were a fire  
Starting among the mountains. Their desire  
Took light at her, and glowing in their faces,  
Made some more shamefast than she ever was—  
Save with one only. Him she scarce would pass  
Without a frown, or quickening of her paces.

And once this man had chanced to see her lie,  
Himself unseen, (March it was ; when the sky  
Northwards was one grey shouting) in the camp  
Beyond the high fir planting. He had stared—  
She knew not for *how* long had Reuben dared  
To watch her, ere with sudden speech and tramp

Through the dry voices of the bents he came,  
Calling her. For the girl had grown as flame  
Before his eyes ; and often, from the fells  
Above the slack that hid her home, he saw  
Her red hair flicker in some passing flaw—  
And day or night he saw how nothing else

Might so lead him from loneliness, and steer  
So bright a course for him. Yet came she near,  
Sometimes his voice grew dumb in him with strain  
Of the unspoken words at work within  
He durst not speak. This, lest they failed to win  
Her ears, through one strait moment, when his brain

\* A hollow.    † A narrow way between hills.

Might shape his heart's speech into such a guise  
A young lass might make welcome.—In her eyes,  
His height and breadth bore witness to his ways—  
A great man roughened by the windy fells  
To something in their likeness ; with their spells  
Of quiet on him sometimes, and their haze

Of mysteries and brooding. At times, he passed  
Along the rigg† high up on Lochanwast,  
Of evenings. And Jim Andrews' Alison  
Would spy him, and go swiftly by the track  
Within a copse of rowans, up the slack ;  
And where the lonning\* left the trees, and one

Grey rock stood crowned with saplings, she would stare  
Across a mile of wistful evening air,  
And watch at Reuben, calling him by name  
Softly. Or she would wonder how he throve  
In house and fold and garth ; or why she strove  
To flout him—when to flout him was a shame.

\* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \*

There came that March-wild sunset : Binsey Head,  
Among its crags and firs and grasses, led  
Great harmonies ; whilst round a press of light  
Retreating up the western rocks, the world  
Her own slow shadow's closing onset curled.  
When but the high rocks on the fell were bright,

\* A lane or trackway. † A ridge.

There Reuben chanced to see her in shadow lie—  
As one who lay and hearkened earth and sky  
And watched, from out the snug dike's bottom grass,  
The last rays o'er the summit burn. And he  
Felt life strive in him, and eternity  
Around—like one at bay within a pass.

“Yung Elsie, but tha's best be gauin' haume !  
Snauw's nun sau fur out yon !” For answer came  
From Alison, the neb-plates of her clogs  
Beating the grass behind her. Then she rose :  
Her hair blew wild. And Reuben felt his foes  
Wax terrible—and shouted to his dogs.

“Eyh ! Snauw's out yon. Tha's gettin' on. Tha's  
nigh  
T' find th' weather out then, Reuben ! Eyh ?  
Tha's a grand man, maebbe, t' find things out !  
Th' nor' wind blaws sau chill this waey, I'm all  
For saeyin' 'tis th' snauw. Maebbe 'twill fall  
An' hush this wind as blauws my *hair* about !”

And a great gust took hold of her, and flung  
Her against him ; the while her hair, that stung  
His bitten face, went through it skin and bone—  
Driving his brain above a pit. He groped  
Through darkness at her head : his hand he roped  
With one bright tress, and cried her for his own.

But the wind parted them ; and since her eyes  
Were hidden, he had for answer to his cries :  
“If tha durst cum anigh me under yon,  
(The planting) tha'll get nau more words o' me !  
T' taeke a lass sau, Reuben, fie ! Maebbe  
Tha taekes me for naut but a sheep ! Gau on !

“Nau follerin’ me, my lad !” And Reuben thrust  
Due east along the firs, where every gust

Howled night upon him, and the brambles whined  
Under the firs, of darkness and defeat.

But Alison, she crossed the wood ; and bit

Her rough lips hard—the north had made unkind.

Her lips, maybe, would please no lad just then,  
Wind-roughened so ! And there was this with men—

They took dislikings easy. She would know  
Such joy with Reuben, her kiss must so contrive  
To reach his roots that memories might strive  
In him like first flowers, after winter snow.

And the first kiss she gave him was to heal  
Sharp words her lips had dealt him. Like a wheel

Within her head, his cry rushed round and round—  
Her ears were loud with it : below the firs  
In that last light, a roaring universe

Broke like a sea—and still she heard the sound.

That night, down in the slack, her ears could mark  
His voice come over Thunder through the dark.

On Lochanwast a great wind searched the ridge,  
Shouting all night : the rowan copse near by  
Was full of voices : through it all a cry

Sprang—Reuben’s voice, and sharpened to an edge.

\* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \*

In April, higher sunlight showed the year  
A half-grown thing with voices over her  
In every covert and under every dome  
The changing sky built up with lights and showers.  
Through a long pause of wind-deserted hours  
The girl lay still, not far from Reuben's home.

The light was poured into a web of song  
From heavens renewed : the fells rose strange and young  
In their green places : there she heard of things  
Born without pain as none in human life ;  
But most—a voice as though of Reuben's wife  
Singing, a song of triumph, through the Spring's.

Yet in that new embrace of earth and sky  
The woman shared, her man came never nigh.  
She saw him once, and caught her breath : her hands  
Gripped hard on earth—then felt its goodness break.  
For Reuben let some lambing trouble take  
Him from her sight, among the lower lands.

And the may's breath lay wide about the thorn,  
The cuckoo sent his voice around the tarn,  
Loudly the ewes ranged over Lochanwast,  
Ere Reuben went on Thunder fells again—  
Hid in a cloud. But as he walked, the rain  
Set up great bows nigh Binsey Head, and passed.

She took their lonning, that folk called Long Mire ;  
Under wet rowans watched the ancient fire—  
Through the leaves' drip and song of birds, the broad  
Arches of changing glory come and go ;  
Then cried out quickly. Right within the bow  
Walked Reuben, like a god come from a cloud.

So seen, with glory all about him poised,  
He had, for her, things that the Scriptures voiced.

She heard The Law—hushed, holy, full of change,  
As when she stood on Sunday, and the rays  
Looked in upon her with their solemn ways,  
In Glenspot church. And Reuben, far and strange,

Clothed with the burning presence of the bow,  
Laid hands upon her head, and bade her go

Through fire and water for him. Feeling this,  
She felt God through the man, and through her sight  
The living colours in her brain unite,—

Birds', becks', lambs', ewes', the whole earth's  
ecstasies.

She saw him reach the quarry way, which led  
From Thunder's high side on to Binsey Head,

Joining the road-end there, beside the fir.

“He wud be maekin' for Greenlatter, sure !”

(From Binsey Head there are three miles of moor

Slope westward. Grouse and buzzard hawks go there ;

There hag worms\* lie in sun heat ; and the ground  
Is a poor place will quake to carry hound,

Whole rods together, where a mile of moss  
Lies darkly. Few folk go there . . . Yet the  
womb

Of elements seemed thereabouts ; the tomb  
Of powers—for Reuben : so he went across.)

Then Alison, who saw the splendour pass  
From off the fells, and but the heath and grass

Shining with common water drops, returned.  
Down in the cottage, the bows were in her eyes  
Still, and the God whose work in mortal guise

Walked in the rays. The room about her burned

\* adders.

From rag-mat up to rafter, from wall to wall.  
She sat, and shut her eyes, her hair let fall  
Over her eyes—its quiet like a hood  
Hung round her ; and the stone below her feet  
Seemed not more still. Outside, first summer-heat  
Began along the fells, and came and stood

Close, in the eavesdrip ; while among her hair  
She sought to hold the vision, with its air  
Rain-cooled and coloured as the irised wake  
Of great dreams going. Then as in a trance  
She felt herself withdrawn by circumstance,  
Itself withdrawn as in an ancient brake.

As into some old thicket she had passed,  
Outside the world. And Thunder, Lochanwast,  
And Binsey Head, and far to the nor'west  
Greenlatter rising and the moors between  
With Reuben in their sunlight,—all were seen  
Moving. But in the thicket there was rest.

Rest, deep with dreams, was there ; and still with thought  
Life stood beside her, still as in a grot  
Where no wind comes, though living air yet lays  
Its lips to water, and of that quiet kiss  
Green mosses have their life and mysteries  
Of silent pasture—time's withdrawing-place.

There she was gone—remote, and a great while  
As well as a great way, by broad fell mile  
Or the broad May day judged—as women go  
When love, with all his elemental air  
Rayed, urgent, takes their senses by the hair  
And kindles them as rain within the bow.

Outside, the becks' full choir in sunlight splashed  
The rocks and stones with music. Levin flashed  
Its burning waters at the sky. The trees  
Spoke all together ere at last they grew,  
Save for their drip, to silentness : a ewe  
Searched somewhere in the hazels under these.

Yet still she mused, in respite from the thing  
Turned swift now towards the summer from the spring—  
The April time within her, that was done.  
To hide awhile was all her need or care—  
The vision yet awhile amid her hair—  
Hide from a man far-walking in the sun.

The Life moved over her. She rose and stood :  
The room filled with her hair and maidenhood  
Flung wide in waking beauty and surprise.  
"He wud be maekin' for Greenlatter, sure !"  
She spoke, the sunlight standing by the door.  
But "O God, give me him !" was in her eyes.

Then : "Reuben lad, tha's taeken hauld my heart  
This time, I'm thinkin' !" And with tricks of art  
She held her wild hair staidly to her head.  
"Tha'll need nau more such handfulls t' tha fist.  
Tha'll gripe me till tha's got me still an' kissed !  
I willna want tha gaune till we be wed !"

Behind the heights north-westward, Reuben now  
Stood by the beck that sings in Hunter's How  
To wind-sown pines. The last warm breath of rain  
Dried on the dark trees' drowsing heads above.  
The place was lonely as the man in love.  
The beck's voice wooed, then drove him on again.



A furlong, and a hunter's gate let through  
A dry-wall there the heaven's farthest blue,  
    Blinked with wet bars against the light. He bore  
Straight for the gate ; and sought to shut away  
The girl who in his footsteps night and day  
    Was always and was never. On the moor

The sunlight burned, still, silent fire : the light  
Seemed all that lived there ; till upon his right  
    A whaup\* went up and dropped slow cries. And once  
A hag worm, a great adder, dark and long,  
Slid from warm ground and crept with flashing tongue  
    From man's sight and from heaven's and the sun's.

The sad bird crying, and the silent worm  
Whose tongue moved as in menace, lent a form  
    Of mockery to all his thoughts descried.  
From out that light and heat there came forth less  
Of joyous life than grafts of bitterness.  
    But most his shadow mocked him by his side.

A power of ancient, spent, and baffled years—  
Sun-lighted hopes blown out by windy fears  
    Long, long ago ; and windy hopes that were,  
Burnt out in that slow fire which from the skies  
Still falls on dust that once had shining eyes,—  
    A power of *thwarting* seemed to harbour there.

But most his shadow mocked him. Did she know  
How once their shadows, mixed upon the snow,  
    Had fleered the fellow of his after days ?  
Beside the warm live man, on stone or grass,  
The sun could give him for a mate, alas,  
    But that thing, grey as whinstone in a haze.

\* curlew.

“ Au eyh ! she wudna ha’ me, thaugh I’d dee  
T’ gie her less than much o’ joy ! ” And he  
Strode with shrewd strides among the quaking hags.\*  
“ Yon’s a grand plaece for such as lost th’ use  
O’ livin’ ; wud laey a body out, an’ loose  
Him down as sauft ! ” A buzzard from the crags

Sailed over, and from heaven watched the earth,  
On preyful wings ; whose death-right was their birth  
And old in nature when their natal scaurs †  
That watched the morning and the evening light  
Cross over, saw the Roman camps at night,  
Or Druid altars, rear red misty stars.

Grouse hurried by across the lone man’s ken.  
“ Ha’ dun wi’ suchlike bludy crack ! ” But when  
Again the gorcock warned him with their cry  
*Go-back ! go-back !* thought settled in his face,  
And watched the birds as though they were a race—  
The prize, some favour ’twixt the earth and sky.

“ Nau ! nau ! She *wudna !* ” But he heard their talk  
Grow far and cease, ere he began his walk  
Again : for when he heard them shout at him,  
He’d stood, and wiped the sweat from out his frown.  
His clothes, rain-heavy, steamed against the sun :  
But older mists had made his eyes to dim.

Through the inundant wave of that full time  
When summer, spreading, mantles clime by clime  
Up the fell pikes and warms the highest ground,  
The man’s thought and the woman’s strove to reach—  
Strove through a fateful distance, each to each :  
The shining miles but mocked them—they were  
drowned.

† craggy cliffs. \* hummocky places of peat and ling, here boggy.

Then Reuben, adding to his fate, went on ;  
And from Greenlatter, saw the moorland shone  
With all the powers of noonday—yet withal  
Dull-featured as the doubt that dogged him thence :  
The undersky would want its elements—  
Peace would not grace his homeward evenfall.

Nay ! on the moor the hags would gloom and grow  
Long-shadowed, when the light was getting low,  
Without their native semblances of sleep.  
And from the rising to the morning moon  
The owls, that heard their sudden voices swoon  
Far out on starry opens, now would sweep

Greenlatter's and the firs of Binsey Head  
With less of quiet on their wings than dread.  
Nor night, nor day, would people Lochanwast  
With its familiar presences by fold  
Or tarn or rigg or rooftree—with her old  
Splendours, earth would not when the rains were  
passed.

And turning from his errand of the kine  
That brought him there, he saw the silver line  
Of Solway ; and upon the Scottish shore,  
Criffell throw off his rains ; and great hills stand  
Deep in blue light upon Northumberland.  
And all things far seemed now to need him more.

Then on the distances of norland raised  
To meet the faint fair sky, for him were phased  
Wide calms, where no fears lurked from fell to fell  
Larger than black-faced sheep, and no hopes loomed  
Beyond their natural heights, and no man doomed  
His days and nights to doubtful tracts of hell.

Thus the unquiet in him urged his feet  
To change horizons, while yet his pulses beat  
From the hot climb across the fell. And soon  
His purpose trod upon his thoughts of love—  
Felt that rough trackway with its larks above  
Through the broad-glowing hours of afternoon.

And in the evening through the seventh hour,  
From English Street he gazed at Stanwix tower ;  
Or heard the Carlisle newsboys wide and far ;  
Or marked the many signs that England made  
From bills that decked the city's light and shade—  
That bade the Border folk take up the war.

Later, the trains passed loud across the dark :  
Long hours he heard them—as he lay would mark  
Their sound come out of Scotland, to the south  
Shrink—and would wonder on what human load  
Of fighting men was hasting by a road  
That led to war's red daybreak. In his mouth

The name of war had tasted strange, a word  
Not of his own—though since last August, heard  
By night and day along the fells—but one  
Men spoke of as 'twere word of Germany's.  
And Wat, his bow-legged help from out Dumfries,  
Had named a red polled Angus bull, *The Hun*.

\* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \*

At dawn a dream enlisted him. The thought  
Stood high in him as in the azure fraught  
With gold of noon the sun stood high. Then he  
Had taken oath ; and written Wat, to bide  
Close on the farm—"I'm for the wars." The tide  
Of Eden river slipping to the sea

Seemed like his life—grown calm now ; the unrest  
Of its headwaters in the high fells' breast  
Left far behind, as he had left his own  
Outpourings where the blae-girt crags, and cloud  
Close-fitted to the mountains like a mood,  
Had made his secret theirs, and theirs alone.

But soon he left the Eden for the pines  
Of southern commons, and the tented lines  
Where men lose touch with dreams—but learn to stand  
Or move as one man, hours by hours, and think  
But as some one man wills them, though on the brink  
Of life. Three months he sweated in the sand,

Months harsh with grit that rubbed his mind away  
From the high places where old starlights play  
On far-viewed peaks of memory—memories  
Of mountain waters where his love was given ;  
Of nights whose dark and silent sides were riven  
By the white fall anigh Seaturrock screes.

Still through his homeward-looking hours it came,  
That faint old scar of water ; as a flame  
Pushed through the nature of still, teeming, night  
Peopled by hill-shapes and by silences  
Akin to them ; sometimes a scar grown less,  
At times flushed forth, at times grown large and white.

Still within earshot of his mind, by hours,  
Sometimes, a voice of all the becks and powers  
Of water harboured in the hills enquired  
Anew throughout his soul. The answer led  
Through windy twilights over Binsey Head—  
Far out on Thunder fells retired, retired.

One thing alone was clear—if lacking joy :  
Duty he turned to for his soul's employ . . . . .  
The first sea voyage of his life had passed.  
Strange folk in a flat land had welcomed him.  
And one old woman, when the day was dim  
In poplar spires, had spread her hands and cast

Some unknown blessing on him through a mist  
Of dust ; one, later, caught him by the wrist,  
From out a wet wild coppice, crying—" Kill !  
Kill ! Kill ze Boches !" ; and one had claimed a franc  
For three small apples gathered from a bank  
And nettled ditch nigh orchards on a hill.

\* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \*

And now he lived to crawl about a wood,  
While death searched all that tortured neighbourhood—  
Tearing the trees, and limbs from men. It came  
And burst men open at a stroke : the sound  
Of death passed through the reeking air and ground  
While Reuben and his fellows put a name

To death : with joking words each separate form  
They heralded ; and met him storm by storm  
With laughing oaths. With oaths that were their last,  
Some held their flesh together for a space  
And looked men near them fairly in the face  
The while they died : some, screaming, splashed and  
passed

Backwards and forwards through their own blood : and  
some

Broke into childish talk of friends and home :

Some yelled the name of Christ : some, raving mad,  
Made noises of the ape : some did but die,  
And looked a great way up into the sky  
With eyes that nothing living ever had.

For days the broken lights from sun and cloud  
Passed through the wood whose shadows were a shroud

For mortal agonies. The blasted leaves  
Whirled from the shell-burst, and the leaves that fell  
To autumn's quiet ; shapes impalpable  
That harboured there awhile like fugitives

Or took the light a moment and were gone  
Into their caves of ether—all that shone

In eyes that dared not sleep against the day  
Though the stretched brain behind them dreamed in air  
Three paces beyond their place of vigil there :—

All these were watched by Reuben where he lay.

For now the laughing oath, the cunning smile  
Had left him there with death and these awhile.

And now a cloud came on his brain—his soul  
Now went as softly wide across the wood  
To watch him from a German's eyes, who stood  
Without his brains and clutched a young larch pole.

Wonder would come—that so great foolishness  
As war found hearing yet on earth. A press  
Of angers now would crowd him nerve by nerve.  
Disgusts that ate him up ; self-hates that ran  
Filching all pride in him as fighting-man,  
These visited the trench that, curve on curve, -

Went through the wood : they found him out and said,  
Through all the deafness gathered round his head,  
“ Glory ! ” and “ Honour ! ”—till his brain was full  
Of mumbled words as meaningless as “ time ”  
To a young lover watching blushes climb  
Upon young cheeks. The echoes in his skull

Seemed not so hard to bear or put away  
As were the prickings felt throughout a day  
Cloud-wearied, with an autumn weariness,  
Deep in his tortured spirit. For in the fires  
Of man's long martyrdom, the twisted wires  
Before his eyes still seemed to writhe ; a mess,

Hung on them—red and seared, without a face,  
That had been man—still seemed to throb. The place  
Where Christ the crucified was put to hang  
Had not more dreadful trees nor darkened air  
Than in this wood all day showed sinister,  
Nor sharper cries when soul from body sprang.

He thought of those soft rainfalls of the fells.  
Loved or unloved, he wanted nothing else—  
Like grace they seemed, so quiet, veils wherethrough  
God showed the hills at peace to men. To find  
Himself by Binsey Head, the evening wind  
Voicing the wet fir planting on the brow !



And now his mind veered strangely : there were tears  
Thick in his eyes : now hardly in his ears

The gun-fire shook him from his dreams. " Fall back !  
You there !" It missed him, where he lay alone  
And heard her caulkers strike a lonning stone,  
And her voice calling chickens through the slack.

And now his yearning, only, seemed alive—  
For her, and for her womanhood to shrive

His soul at end of war-farings ; for arms  
To clasp him with a woman's clasp and fill  
His life with unknown tenderness, some still  
And holy evening 'mid the fellside farms.

Now she would pity, could she see him so  
In that foul place of death, crying and low  
With weariness . . . That moment all the  
wood

Roared, burst in flame. He rose to meet his bride,  
His red hands working at his own inside  
In frantic ways and filling with his blood.

His face shrank small and thin : the fires of pain  
Leapt in his eyes, a shadow in his brain

Fell thud by thud. Six paces he had breath,  
The seventh and his day closed on the earth.  
The chill soil smoked awhile, before the birth  
Of that night's dew and stars shone on his death.

*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*

Wat told how Reuben, to a sale of neat  
Beyond Greenlatter, had gone : the sudden heat  
Had caught him on the fells and loosed him mad.  
He needs must off to Carlisle, and enlist.  
Had written that there were monies in the kist  
Beside the bed enough to pay his lad

Six months of wages. And for the farm, he wrote,  
The lawyer man at Cockermouth had note

To treat with Wat as master : this much said—  
In Glenspot's "Crown"—called for a gill of ale.  
Blacksmith spoke up : "Au eyh : I mind th' saele."  
Landlord, he took the florin, dropped his head,

And stared across his stomach. "Eyh ! his luck  
A' roond, Joe," went on Wat. The tap was struck,  
And made their echoes while they drank and stared.  
But Wat, a dourly close man with his crack,  
Refilled his pipe and shoved the dottle back,  
Lit up, then out he walked with shoulders squared.

When he had left Glenspot's last house behind,  
To the broad day he told his inner mind.

"Yon gerri o' Andrews' is in't, red hair an' a' !  
A genty gerri, nae doot as grupp'd him sair."  
Wat turned his head, spat high into the air.

"Yon gerri o' Andrews' has drauve oor mon awa' !

She heard it while her father supped his tea.

Jim Andrews, with a hand upon his knee,

Sat in the cool the evening rowans made.

"Elsa, yon graete lad Reuben's for th' war !  
Th' auld man at Th' Crown was in th' bar "

(She hurt her light-shod foot upon the spade,

And grabbed a root, and peered about the ground,  
And wondered if her father heard the sound

Her strange voice made in answer) " when his Wat  
Cums in an' tells 'em all t' drink his luck.

Saeys Reuben was t' th' saele, when he were struck  
Daft, gauin' along, wi' th' sudden heat ! Glenspot

" Were all acrack wi' *Wat's left master now.*

Twelve munths o' wages advancit, an' a do

O' lawyers t' help wi' more ! Daft's nau mistaeke !"  
Then she : " Naey, father, Reuben's maebbe mad  
Wi' hearin' how his cusin's lost her lad,  
Yung Auwen." Ere she found a berry cake

Upon the parlour table, she had reeled.

The room was grown into a misty field

For size : and 'twixt her throbbing heart and mind  
Her hands were vague of purpose. Cold as stone  
The plate felt, found, but in her hands was grown  
A guide to reach her father. She stood behind,

The while he ate and talked. The rowan stirred  
Faintly above her, and in their leaves she heard

A sigh, and past their leaves, the deep blue dome  
Of heaven keep silent. And then before her eyes  
The evenlight took on her passion's guise :

Now must she dwell in longing, as her home.

And half that night she, kneeling by her bed,  
Prayed passion's prayers. The owls on Binsey Head

Seemed trying to hoot her from her trust in God :  
She did but pray the harder. In her sleep  
She felt an angel with a man's mouth creep  
Between her breasts, answer her womanhood.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

That summer her every day rose to the crown  
Of hopes and fears : her every lying down

Was with a prayer for Reuben. Suns and rains  
Dwelt over Thunder : on the fells afar  
Night rose to change its beacons star by star.

And Alison would watch against the Wain's

Bright splendid coming on the roads of God—  
The silent ways of heaven her prayers had trod ;  
Would watch the worlds outside our own keep on  
Their so remote unquestionable ways  
Of bright and calm. By day the girl would raise  
The kiss-me\* from the grass, bid every one

Bring ease into her heart. Her wanderings  
Were all for Binsey Head, and by the springs  
Of many becks which in that fell have flow,—  
Through pines and birches in a ghil, beneath,  
That, deep with blaes and different coloured heath,  
Adds its own voice to that in Hunter's How.

And after many days, her face on fire,  
She wrote to Reuben,—hid her young desire  
In common words old friends might pen, and such  
As not a stranger's eyes could scan awrong ;  
Nothing of all her prayers and tears and song—  
But Binsey Head she wrote of overmuch.

\* wild heartsease or pansy.

No answer came : the letter missed its man.  
'Twixt doubt and doubt her flurries bade her scan  
The daily lists of death and wounds. The year  
Dwelt in the rowans, faint with yellow gold,  
Calm dying. Then, near to Seaturrock fold,  
She saw Wat shepherding. He called to her.

" *Missing.*" The Scotchman broke her fall to ground ;  
Without unkindness grimly coaxed her round ;  
As slyly watched her feet strive by his side  
O'er the rough part of Thunder fells. Then he  
Made off, with shoutings to the dogs. And she  
Crept to the tarn. Her grey eyes when she cried

Welled green and darkness o'er their rims of blue :  
Her face with change and darkness showing through  
Was eloquent of nightfalls where nor stars  
Would share her vigils, nor dreams delight her sleep ;  
But like to death, her guilt would haunt and creep  
In its own shadow always. For the wars

Had hardly taken Reuben—he was one  
Who held that wars were but a justice done  
On folk who crowned their folly into kings—  
Her wantonness had sent him forth to die.  
Was never day now but from sky to sky  
The morning light would pass to evening's

With signs for her of punishment. If dull,  
Next dawn had been a daybreak merciful—  
But like a flush of triumph morning came,  
Driving the dark : her anguish in that fire  
Fell from her soul, that high and high and higher  
Swept Lochanwast with wings of hope aflame.

And for a month she trysted hope : the news  
Would come to-morrow. She saw the rowans lose  
Their last leaves, and the wan blue daisies hide  
Their eyes' last gold against the winter death ;  
That with long moans amid its freezing breath  
Came on the fells and made the countryside

Of plantings and of dry-walls hoarse and shrill,  
And sharp with hosts of windy spears, that fill  
Each ridge as with thick foemen. And a threat  
Was round about her day and night, a fear  
That hope was false—a traitor coming near  
To cast her down when once she was beset.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

From Binsey Head's loud shade of firry glooms,  
She spied the swift clouds grow—the icy wombs  
Of cold and snow and sleety rain. Their swarms  
Rose in the north, with doubt's insistence throve  
All day to monstrous size—a yellow drove  
Of shapeless lights among their darker storms.

There in the trees she lingered to the dusk.  
She heard his voice. Around, the dropping husk  
Of cones and bark, and dead wood falling light  
On the first snow,—she heard that last of him  
Again, as when they parted there. The dim  
Wood's echoes seemed a concourse vast as night

That gathered there to mock her. To the house  
The fierce winds of that evening brought the boughs'  
Wild waesome clamour, while she sat and heard  
His voice among them breaking into cries  
That broke her heart—the pain rose in her eyes  
Each time the peats before her sparked and stirred.

She had not slept an hour, when through her sleep  
She heard his voice again—far out and deep  
In roaring places of the night. She crept  
From out her bed. Cold clutched her. With wild hands  
She dressed, and shawled her head and bosom. Bands  
Of howling things that over Thunder swept

Entered the porch ; the rowans had a noise  
Of terror ; and a snow-wraith kept its poise  
A whirling moment before the open door,  
Sprang, vanished on the night. The door she shut.  
A dozen yards, the teeming dark had put  
Its wildest white upon her ; in a score,

Her home had passed from out its place. The squalls  
Shook out their blinding burdens : flying walls  
Of snow rushed by her. To the rowan's cry  
Of terror she groped her way ; and underneath  
Their ghastly noise she paused and got her breath,  
And found the lonning through them, by-and-by.

She reached the rock—where once she saw him go,  
That day of glories when the burning bow  
Revealed her love to her through eyes and heart.  
In the rock's lee she shrank, while on its crown  
The saplings whistled, going up and down  
With every gust. If she should fail her part,

He might be gone for ever ! Then she steered  
Straight for the planting on the Head ; and neared  
That wood in uproar,—twice and lost it twice :  
The snow's confusion of the air was such,  
The very night seemed turning round to clutch  
The flying drifts. Through snow and darkness,  
thrice

She struggled, panting, for her goal. A cloud  
Of finer snow came on the place ; and loud  
Above the wind the wood's dark tumult came.  
She gasped for breath and triumph, reached the trees,  
Plunged through their ghosts . . . Her hot ears  
seemed to freeze.

*Yung Elsie, but tha's best be gavin' haume !*

Then she cried out—great cries : “ This waey ! this  
waey !

Nau lad ! dear lad ! I'll seek tha till th' daey ! ”

The branches whipped her face among the wilds  
Of brambles, briars, clutching her. She strove  
With fiends, and beat them, in that dreadful grove.  
Her eyes were bright as fever in a child's.

She burst her way across the wood : the firs  
Writhed now and roared behind her ; but her ears  
Were strained now northward through that driving  
place  
Of wind and snow and night and storming air.  
The whirling drift rose to her sodden hair :  
She thrust it from her ; sprang as for a race



Across the open, shouting all she yearned,  
Nor e'er turned back—only her voice returned,  
Once, twice. Then, faintly, from far out, her cry  
Of "Reuben!" drifted in upon the snow  
Where the wild trees in ghost-like row by row  
Swayed, shrieked, roared, closed in battle with the sky.

And for three hours they battled—till the wood  
Was misty strife. After, they seemed to brood,  
When strife was done and all the winds lay dead.  
And very quietly the snow crept on  
From bough to bough, and made all things at one  
With silence, worlds-deep over Binsey Head.









**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY**

**Los Angeles**

**This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.**

*S R L F*

SEE SPINE FOR BARCODE NUMBER

PR  
6015  
H369b

